

## **“Spenser’s Ireland,” December 1941: Scripting a Response**

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It has been noticed before that words require expert handling in theatres of war. That truth has come home to us in new and appalling ways in the wake of hostilities and regime change in the Middle East: dossiers have been *sexed up*, interrogation techniques *enhanced*, *bottom-up reconciliation* puffed up to do the work of diplomacy. Such “swindles and perversions,” as George Orwell once put it (353), have prompted a new wave of linguists to probe and puncture the soft play of euphemism, and to scrutinise all over again the various kinds of drifting, bleaching, borrowing and compounding that typify semiotic procedure when language is conscripted.<sup>1</sup> *Collateral*, now, will be forever bound to *damage*, no matter how many words you slot between them.

Heartened, certainly, by this renaissance in the field of lexical semantics, language philosophers of a more pragmatic disposition have shown a fresh concern for what we might call the performativity of warspeak – a true Orwellian bit of jargon, and one that sets the tone for this essay. Picking the plumpest euphemism is important to those who dictate foreign policy, critics agree, but the difference between inciting feeling and effecting action is not only semantic, for there is an illocutionary distinction to be drawn between war-mongering and war-declaring, between the gravity of a speech and the weight of a speech-act. Declaring war is a delicate business, as Brien Hallett reminds us (2012) – a business that relies on an exact coincidence of intonation, circumstance, and perceived authority – which makes it all the more surprising that rhetoricians have not always shown due regard for the conditions of political utterance:<sup>2</sup>

Since Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor had created a state of war, President Roosevelt’s message needed only to be a statement of that fact. But it was much more: with his skill in radio speaking the Commander-in-Chief welded a nation of listeners into a single great weapon of determined effort for victory. (Packard [1948] 1951, 87)

When Frederick Packard, Jr. resolved in 1948 to produce an edition of “short speeches that have shaped our destiny,” he did so knowing that readers would buy his book, not to hear his take on the speeches, but to hear the speakers speaking for themselves. There is a sort of repressed enthusiasm, then, about blurbs like this one – a preface to Roosevelt’s address to Congress on 8 December 1941 – such that one might spot in Packard’s fleeting display a will to say something memorable at the expense of factual accuracy. It is true, in one sense, that the bombardment of Pearl Harbor had “created a state of war” in December 1941, but Packard distorts the evidence when he intimates that Roosevelt had had nothing more to do the following morning than impart a status report. For while he’d certainly hoped in the space of those precious six minutes to rally his audience and to revamp himself as “Commander-in-Chief,” Roosevelt in fact had intended to do both more and less than his listeners had come to expect of their President, first by pointing out to them that “the facts of yesterday speak for themselves,” and then by declining to allow those “facts” the final say by deferring to the good-sense of the nation’s representatives: “I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December seventh, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.”

And there the broadcast had reached its conclusion – 12.36pm (EST) – not with Roosevelt’s declaration of war, as the history books have sometimes claimed, but with a firm appeal to his colleagues to exercise their own illocutionary powers. Seven years on, Packard sidesteps this crucial directive and prompts his readers instead to appreciate once more the late President’s “skill in radio speaking,” and to “[n]ote the simplicity, directness, and moral force of his words.” To do so, then and now, is not only to gloss over the dicey quality of public warspeak, and so to disregard the fine line Roosevelt treads between performance and performativity. It might also be to underestimate the sort of work that went in to crafting his latest radio turn – the sort of work (typically accomplished behind the scenes) that has to do with cultivating certain kinds of *indirection*, and with assembling layers of implication that allowed him, on this and other occasions, to make his listeners think, and

think again. We now know what Packard could only have imagined in 1948, which is that Roosevelt's address to Congress had undergone painstaking revision in the hours leading up to its performance. Having dictated the first draft to his secretary, Grace Tully, on the evening of 7 December, Roosevelt had taken it upon himself to pencil in some amendments – adding, erasing, rewording, updating – ostensibly without the help of his usual aides.<sup>3</sup> Among the most striking of these amendments was Roosevelt's adjustment of the key opening phrase – turning “a date that will live in world history” into “a date that will live in infamy” – but there are also second thoughts and subtler revisions that speak in his final message to the queer responsibility of sounding speechless. Where, in his first draft, Roosevelt had referred to the nation being “simultaneously and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces,” he opted in subsequent iterations for a note of surprise – “*suddenly* and deliberately” – thereby shifting the narrative emphasis quite firmly from the fact of a two-pronged campaign to the escalating fiction that the military outfit in Hawaii had been caught entirely unawares. And lest, in this light, he should leave listeners in any doubt about his grounds for encouraging a trigger-happy response, Roosevelt went to some pains to tweak his concluding remark. Rather than observing, as he had in his first version, that “since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday ... a state of war exists between the United States and the Japanese Empire,” he elected on reflection to draft in the present perfect tense (“a state of war *has existed*”), dispersing in its wake any suggestion that the conditions for retaliation had only just begun to dawn on the incumbent administration. With pencil in hand, and an eye on the clock, Roosevelt had scripted his most timely talk to date, and it's remarkable to think that his success might have hinged on a bit of grammar.

There's no knowing for sure whether Marianne Moore listened in to Roosevelt's broadcast on 8 December 1941, but there are solid grounds for speculation. Four in every five American households are reckoned to have tuned in that afternoon, and for Moore there was a personal reason for turning the dial.<sup>4</sup> News had spread rapidly in the hours following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, so it's possible that Moore may already have learned the fate of two familiar battleships, the USS

Arizona and the USS Detroit, both of which had carried her brother Warner, through less troubled waters, in his early years as a naval chaplain.<sup>5</sup> Moore had once quibbled over the precise quality of her brother's vocation – she never could work out whether shipping is “the most interesting” or “the most congenial thing in the world” – and one wonders whether Pearl Harbor had any part to play in thwarting those earlier sentiments.<sup>6</sup> There had been a time when newsflashes of this kind had left the Moore household cold – “[m]y mother and I are anti-radio,” she'd informed Ezra Pound in November 1931 (*SL*, 260) – yet her resistance had waned in the worst years of the Depression, and keeping up with current affairs had become a regular point of fascination and debate between Marianne and Mary Moore in the course of Roosevelt's ethereal rise to power. “The radio at times has remarkable things on it and we have it as loud as we like,” Moore hollered in the summer of 1932, evidently content to have assumed temporary guardianship of Warner's set; and though she was reluctant, as always, to speak for her mother (“I don't know whether Mouse likes it or not”), the poet could see that the medium had already begun to change the atmosphere of their Brooklyn residence, whose rarefied acoustic now had to accommodate something more than their daily sparring, and which was to become a kind of vocal lab, or echo chamber, at the height of 1932's presidential election (*SL*, 272). “Of late I have been using the radio,” Moore reported on 6 October that year, “and have been troubled by the porcine self-interest of our country; but was stirred in a different way last night by Mr. Hoover's Des Moines address” (*SL*, 253). Moore was quick to spot the opportunities as well as the pitfalls of fighting an election on-air, and it came as a serious blow to her to see Herbert Hoover flounder, despite his very evident talent for turning out “a humdinger, crafty and humourous but also deadly serious” (*SL*, 253). Indeed, Moore never forgave Hoover's opponent, Franklin D. Roosevelt, precisely because she felt that the Democrat had done so little to set her mind – and ears – at rest. “As for prospective political salvation,” she complained to Kenneth Burke in November 1932, “Governor Roosevelt, when he speaks, always says just the unsuitable thing, and I don't know how we are to expect him henceforth to be wise” (*SL*, 283).

It will seem a curiosity, then, to begin an essay about Moore by invoking Roosevelt as an exemplary media strategist. His rise to prominence in this respect has received sustained attention – particularly his famed fireside manner – but not by Moore readers, and never, to my knowledge, in relation to her long-awaited book of 1941, *What Are Years*.<sup>7</sup> My purpose, here, is to suggest that something of the media strategist can be detected in this pivotal collection, though we are unlikely to find in it anything as substantive as an allusion, source, or name-check.<sup>8</sup> The nature of these poems' relation to their political environment, rather, has to do with their refashioning in 1941 as sound events, a process of loosening their bibliographic codes in ways that would have seemed inconceivable to earlier generations of politicians and poets, and which must raise questions about their subtle performative clout. That Roosevelt expected the details of Pearl Harbor to “be recorded” on 8 December is old news (Packard 1951, 87), but it may come as a surprise to know that Moore too was moved to put her voice on record in the very same turbulent week, migrating in her own heuristic mood from print to sound waves, and discovering in the course of performance a covert means of radicalizing the most unassuming of lyrics. The chance similarity between Moore's annotative method and Roosevelt's will become clear in due course, but the story of the poet's foray into media relations in the wake of Pearl Harbor begins in Harvard.

On December 11, three days after the official declaration of war by Congress, Moore travelled unaccompanied to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she'd been invited to address the Gray Foundation on “aids to persuasiveness” in the university's Sever Hall (Moore 1976, 14). The talk she delivered on this occasion would be published in 1949, with some revisions, as “Humility, Concentration, and Gusto”.<sup>9</sup> Her audience that day in 1941 included I. A. Richards (a relative newcomer to Harvard), Mr and Mrs Henry Eliot, and F. O. Matthiessen, whose “interesting and friendly” feedback appears to have come as a sweet shock to Moore, who'd struggled to piece her talk together, and who continued to think of the exercise as a piece of ““home work”” (Moore 1941a). “I ought not to give it away,” she wrote to Hildegard Watson on her return to New York, dismayed a little by her own ingratitude, “but Harvard was devastating” (1976, 14). Save for a

chance meeting with a black poodle – who “mercifully permitted me to hold his paw” – Moore was initially disposed to think of her visit as a disaster, from her railway journey (and the risk of “having the hem of my dress soiled”) to a “solemn little tea” intended to pep her up in time for the afternoon’s business (1976, 14). Still, where others might have taken the proverbial black dog for a bad omen, Moore warmed gradually to the memory of performing in Sever Hall – “like an operating amphitheatre with rather steep aisles” – as well as to the news that her niece, who’d come all the way from Wellesley to see the “Harvard affair” for herself, had instantly begun to boast of her “distinguished aunt” (Warner Moore, 1941). “[A]ll my resistances and fears were forgotten,” she reported to Mary Craig Shoemaker some weeks later, before going on to assure her cousin – and perhaps to convince herself – that these antics in Cambridge had not allayed but aggravated her concern for foreign affairs: “We are all feeling, of course, the weight and grief of the war. The ‘two years’ Mr. Churchill speaks of, seem a lifetime; I hope you guard your strength by not listening to certain commentators on the radio...” (Moore 1941a).

That Moore sought in some small measure to check or regulate her family’s listening habits in December 1941 is a suggestive thought, and though the identity of these “certain commentators” remain a mystery, it is plain to see that the poet’s day-trip to Harvard had given her a new sense of proportion. Because what Moore neglected to mention in her yuletide letter to Shoemaker is what happened next – after the tea, after the lecture, after the dinner – in the sanctuary of the Woodberry Poetry Room.<sup>10</sup> Rather than returning post-haste to Brooklyn, Moore had been whisked away at 9 o’clock to record a selection of poetry, and to be put through her paces by the resident specialist in rhetorical and performance arts. That specialist was none other than Frederick Packard Jr.. Packard had risen through the ranks at Harvard in the interwar years, first as an assistant professor, attached to the university’s Speech Clinic, and then as the Associate Professor of Public Speaking.<sup>11</sup> By the early 1940s, Packard’s in-house record label, the Harvard Vocation, had become well known in poetry circles on both sides of the Atlantic, particularly among Moore’s most industrious paragons – Eliot, Pound, and Auden. Moore was nervous to add her voice to the expanding catalogue, by all

accounts, though her admission to the Vocation was by no means a done deal. Indeed, she would have to wait three years to learn that her “somewhat unadaptive repertoire” was fit for production (Moore 1944a), and on the basis of that news – and a complimentary disc – Moore was encouraged to relive her encounter with Packard:

Technically – if I may say so – the recording is a triumph; there is no swish; no abrupt changes in volume disrupt the continuity; in fact I detect no extraneous influence upon the sound. [...] Your saving suggestion that it is desirable to have a certain rapt confidence in what one is reading, gave this Harvard recording its value, I feel; and will be permanently helpful to me. (Moore 1944b)

Moore goes on in the same note to admire “the timings of the divisions between poems,” the “delicacy of the microphone,” and the “surprising verisimilitude” conveyed in the pace of her reading. In case Packard should think such praise a sign of self-congratulation, Moore leaves him in no doubt that her technical success has its roots in good vocal pedagogy: “I could not have imagined that caricature could have been redeemed into plausibility as you redeemed it by your help with diction, the evening you made the recording.”

After years of fretting that her recording was not up to scratch, Moore begins in this letter to excavate its delicate fabrication. Charting the bumpy course of a poem from sign to sound, page to plastic, confounds the codes and usual workings of material bibliography, and Moore struggles (three years on) to separate one kind of labour from another – the feat of Packard’s seamless engineering from her own repertoire of vocal gestures and execution. Linda Leavell has spoken briefly yet brilliantly of Moore’s positive response to Packard’s instruction (2014), and I’ve found further material to reveal that her dealings with him in 1941 prompted her to seek out the advice of other elocutionists and engineers, including Lois Moseley at Decca Records and Peter Bartók at Caedmon.<sup>12</sup> In doing so, Moore broke into an emerging performance culture that not only allowed

her to do the things we know she liked to do to texts – revising, excising, reordering, resurrecting – but also encouraged her, with a new breed of reader in mind, to brave a stylistic makeover that would finally prove lucrative and long-lasting, but which would also seem problematic at times, particularly to those who could still see the advantage of marshalling disparate source material, and of finding ways to inhabit borrowed voices without pretending to own or master them outright. The poems she decided to record in December 1941 were lifted from *What Are Years* – “Rigorists,” a selection of excerpts from “Virginia Britannia,” and “Spenser’s Ireland” – each of which might be thought to court the very difficulty of “colonizing” distant sayings (AG, 44). The colonial question was evidently much in her thoughts when she arrived in Cambridge, and one voice in particular would play on her mind all day:

In a certain account by Padraic Colum [*sic*] of Irish storytelling, “Hindered characters,” he remarked parenthetically, “seldom have mothers in Irish stories, but they all have grandmothers” – a statement borrowed by me for something I was about to write. The words have to come in just that order or they aren’t pithy. (*CPr*, 426)

That dashed afterthought – “a statement borrowed by me” – denotes a rare moment of transparency on Moore’s part, though one wonders whether she may, for one night only, have replaced “something I was about to write” with “something I’m about to *read*.” For within a few hours of uttering these lines in Sever Hall, Moore would be recycling them in her recording of “Spenser’s Ireland,” where they crop up (unattributed) in its second division (AG, 48). The nod in both cases to Pádraic Colum’s nugget of wisdom is cleverly executed. Moore is inclined to call it a “statement,” but as Laura O’Connor observes, and as Moore must have gathered from her reading of Maria and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, the soundbite operates here as an Irish bull – a solecistic speech-act, which is at once grammatically infelicitous, logically absurd, and memorable.<sup>13</sup> The point, we’re told, is pithiness – it’s all in the word-order – and yet it would be foolish to take Moore at *her* word

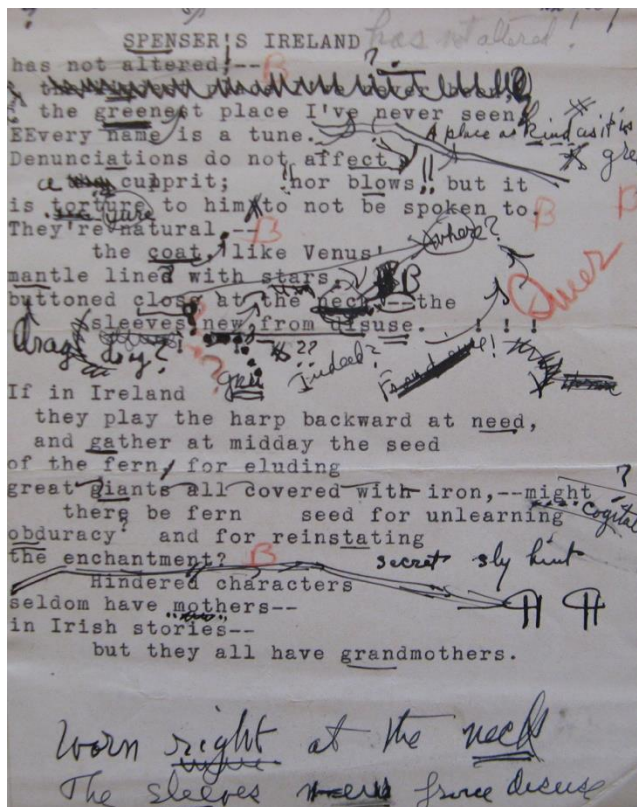


in a piece that purports to dispense with the instruments of robust syntax (“such as unnecessary commas, modifying clauses, or delayed predicate”), and which makes a show of generating solipsism in ways that seem to confound the call for fewer commas (“Here, I may say, I am preaching to myself, since, [etc]”) (*CPr*, 420-21). As Bonnie Costello has said, the poet’s tactic in this essay, as throughout so much of her verse and prose, is “to acknowledge principles and then violate them” (225), which is precisely what she does here by upsetting Colum’s precious syntax: his words do *not* come “in just that order,” strictly speaking, because Moore cuts in parenthetically (and here’s the joke) to point out a parenthesis.

It’s a small but telling inconsistency, this, and the matter of intending to get things in the right order – or failing to do so, deliberately or otherwise – bears meaningfully upon the ethic and grammar of Moore’s subsequent reading of “Spenser’s Ireland.” This is the poem, after all, in which “playing the harp backward” seems a magical thing to do, and with which Moore herself played fast and loose in mid-1941 by inserting Colum’s solecism after the first round of publication, thereby revising her poem so as to imagine, as it were, a bull and a harp in close harmony.<sup>14</sup> Oddly, then, Moore’s debt to Colum can be said to have mounted as “Spenser’s Ireland” continued to mutate in the public domain, but this should not obscure the nature of her commitment to other sources in this thickly-textured poem – Edmund Spenser’s *View of the State of Ireland* (1598), Donn Byrne’s “Ireland: The Rock Whence I was Hewn” (1927), and so on – which account for over half of its uneven lines, and which place it firmly at the “meeting point” Heather Cass White has identified between two kinds of praxis in Moore’s mid-career verse, between “polysemous complexity” on the one hand, and “didactic simplicity” on the other (*AG*, xiii).<sup>15</sup> Readers have worked hard to enumerate and explain Moore’s obligations at this stylistic juncture, but it would be a mistake, in the case of the poem’s vocalisation, to cling too closely to any one of its colonial models. The experience of listening to Moore’s recording of December 1941 has the peculiar effect of taking you back to the start of the summer, to the poem’s first printing in *Furioso*, which appeared with no explanatory notes, and so required – as in the moment of listening – a reader to

come to terms with the sensation of polyphony without quite being able to determine the niceties of name or textual origin. So while, for instance, it is reasonable for George Bornstein to call Byrne's essay "the most important source" for "Spenser's Ireland" (107), this sort of claim is unlikely to register meaningfully in the course of performance, which is rather apt to smooth over the contours of vocal difference, and to amplify those aspects of the poem that appeal to a sympathetic (though no less discriminate) ear. This is not to say that Moore's allusion to Byrne in her last stanza is no longer noteworthy; only to suggest that encountering the echo of his voice in real time – "The Irish say your trouble is their / trouble and your / joy their joy?" – is bound to diminish one's impression that Moore is ventriloquizing the voice she purports to be engaging, and to encourage in its place a more complicated notion that she has lost herself in the heat of performance. To have done so might be to realise the troublesome and tantalising implications of a thought that once occurred to Laurence Stapleton, which is that "Spenser's Ireland" gives "scope to her dramatic talent," and that it is "a poem written to be read aloud" (119).

Without disproving or replacing any other kind of "reading," listening to Moore's recording should be instructive for those of us who believe, as Charles Bernstein once advised, that "the audiotape archive of a poet's performance" is a "significant, rather than incidental, part of her or his work" (1998, 7). All we've had to go on, until now, is Moore's studio recording, which is preserved in the sound archives of Harvard's Woodberry Poetry Room and the Library of Congress, and the final commercial product, which is available on LP (Moore 1949). But there is a new way to appraise the sound event of "Spenser's Ireland" in December 1941, and it involves a performance script:

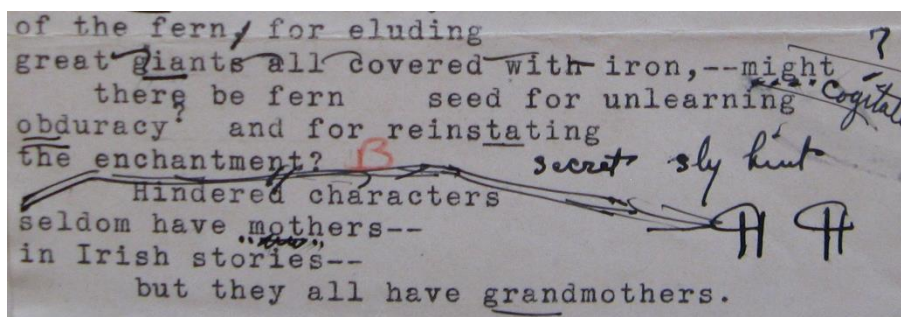


**Fig. 1.** “Spenser’s Ireland” (Moore 1941b, 1)

The existence of this document has been noted before, but on each previous occasion it has been identified as a draft.<sup>16</sup> It will be clear, I hope, that this is much more than an intermediary phase in Moore’s process leading up to publication. Breath marks, slurs, inflections, caesura – the typescript is riddled with elocutionary *aides-mémoire*, many of which Moore will have gleaned from Packard’s pre-performance tutorial, which included a crash-course in enunciation and the trial of a short tongue-twister.<sup>17</sup> “We were about to start,” Moore was later amused to recall: “Mr. Packard said, ‘Now wait. Before we try it, say this after me, – They beat their fists against the posts / And still insist they see the ghosts.’ Much entertained, I said it twice, and from then on things went better” (Moore 1942).

Packard’s influence is perceptible throughout the extant performance scripts, to be sure, but there is good reason to believe that some of Moore’s marginal and interlinear annotations *antedate* her schooling in the sound studio. A letter from Elizabeth Bishop in March 1942 reveals that Moore had fretted considerably over the delivery of her lecture earlier in the day, long before she’d met

Packard, and had seized the initiative by marking it up herself with a view to avoiding errors of diction and emphasis.<sup>18</sup> The residue of this vigilance clearly accounts for some of the surface detail in the evening performance script (**Fig. 1**), but while some of these marks may be taken as evidence of Moore's rhetorical apprehension – a case of anticipating gaffs and slips of the tongue – there are other signs that point to a thoroughly calculated performance, which can be corroborated by comparing script and recording.<sup>19</sup> Vocal uplifts of the sort we see and hear in line 4 – “Every name is a tune” – bespeak a capricious lyric intelligence, whose talent for pitching an agreeable cadence invites us all the more forcefully to question the folksy wisdom of the speaker's opening gambit. In its first magazine and book printings, the poem begins in sprightly iambic mood: “the kindest place I've never been, / the greenest place I've never seen.” Here, however, while retaining the chiming – even charming – confidence of the closed couplet, Moore allows the new third line to distend as she leans on the point of comparison, and nips through the final cluster of syllables: “the greenest place I've never seen, / a place as kind as it is green.” The effect is a looser kind of speech-patterning, which corresponds (in these opening divisions) to a more pronounced semantic texture: “torture,” “disuse” and “obduracy” acquire special emphasis in her reading, and in the process of establishing those stress-points, Moore begins to defuse the lyric's supposed nostalgia for the emerald isle. For a poem that begins in chirpy humour, doubts soon arise in the event of reading as to how “enchantment” might be reinstated.



**Fig. 2.** “Spenser's Ireland” (Moore 1941b, 1 [detail])

“Secret sly hint” is the way Moore planned in the margin to bring these lines to life in performance, and above that cue appears a no less mysterious direction – “cogitate” – which is accompanied by a question mark and the dot-dot-dot of marked deliberation, as though to underline the air of possibility that attends the modal verb, “might”. Singsong logic gives way here to subtlety and rumination, a feeling for all those things that have to pass *sotto voce*, between the lines and beneath the voice.

But why attend so strictly, on 11 December 1941, to the tonal shifts of “Spenser’s Ireland”? What did it mean “in times like these,” as Moore had put it in her lecture that day, to “cogitate” or to “hint” at the problems of “enchantment”? Moore had long sought comfort in the greenest place she’d never seen, both for reasons that have been well documented by her biographers and critics, and for the purposes of promulgating from the very beginning of her career a hybrid national identity that should have done more later to complicate her supposed relation to a “homemade” American modernism. “I am Irish by descent,” she explained in her first letter to Ezra Pound in January 1919, “possibly Scotch also, but purely Celtic” (*SL*, 122). With a quiet, imperative nudge, Moore had urged Ireland to “rise automatically” in the wake of 1916’s bloody, republican insurrection (*BMM*, 223), and she continued in the 1920s to commend the nation’s imaginative resources – particularly poetry – which she considered crucial after the war to its “reanimation,” as well as a cure for “our restiveness” in the first unsettled months of the Irish Free State (*CPr*, 197). One of the most important conduits for the state of Irish politics at this time was Francis Hackett, a regular contributor to *The New Republic*, and the author in 1918 of *Ireland: A Study in Nationalism*. “I like him,” Moore confessed to Warner in December 1915, just as “sojourn in the whale” had begun to surface in her thinking: “In fact I like him so much I think it would be impossible for me to resent his mood or it would, if he continues to write about things as he has written about them in the past. He said something about the lavendered atmosphere of Bryn Mawr that amused me but that’s a trifle. I don’t take that into consideration” (*SL*, 109). Although Hackett appears to have lost the scent occasionally, he remained a shrewd commentator on developments in Europe, and a

touchstone for Irish-Americans and Irish-born expatriates, in particular, such that Moore went out of her way to establish a line of communication with him.<sup>20</sup> In December 1941, having returned from his own sojourn in foreign lands, it was Hackett's chastened voice that made waves in the New York press:

Many Americans of the same racial origin as myself have closed their eyes to the nature of the present world struggle. They must now see the war in a new light. I urge them to give heed to the Irish predicament.

Ireland cannot save itself from invasion by neutrality. Should invasion be feasible for Hitler, Ireland must submit to it or else take its stance with Britain and America. It invites war by taking this stand, it invites hell by refusing to take it. [...]

Democracy has a fighting chance on this planet, but only a fighting chance, and Ireland cannot possibly survive as a nation unless America triumphs. Surely the Irish in America will strive to align Ireland with America. (Hackett 1941)

All thoughts of Home Rule recede in this short, rallying letter – penned on 8 December – only to reveal a more pressing political matter. The subject of Irish neutrality had been floated in the American press before Pearl Harbor, both by the likes of Hackett in smart magazines, and in papers such as *The Irish World* and *The Gaelic American*.<sup>21</sup> *The New York Times* itself had run an entirely different piece in June, approving the work of a political faction called the American Friends of Irish Neutrality, despite the very obvious pressures of “the present conflict” (1941). Had Moore read that earlier piece, she may have smiled – and then winced – to see the word “denunciation” figure in its scathing description of the group’s attitude to British war-mongering: “denunciations,” as Moore remarks in “Spenser’s Ireland,” “do not affect the culprit,” after all, and the time had come for decisive multilateral engagement. The state of affairs had changed spectacularly by the morning of December 8, indeed, and Francis Hackett was not alone in calling for an instant

adjustment of policy. His sense that Ireland could no longer “save itself from invasion by neutrality” garnered considerable support in the days following Pearl Harbor, notably from the Roosevelt administration, which hoped to obtain naval bases in the newly-founded state of Éire. The President himself had rejected Éamon de Valera’s invitation to assume some responsibility for Irish waters in May 1940 for precisely this purpose, but Roosevelt now made no bones about seeking to “reinforce” the position of the United States’ allies, real or imagined, and finding ways especially to resume conversation with allies who had begun to drift (Roosevelt 1941).<sup>22</sup> The native genius for disunion had become, once again, a talking point of profound significance.

That Marianne Moore had become in some sense *disenchanted* with Ireland by this time on account of its neutrality is old news. Fiona Green (1997), Cristanne Miller (2002-2003), and Tara Stubbs (2013) have each have called attention to the first extant draft of “Spenser’s Ireland,” in which the poet confesses that she is “less & less in love” with her spiritual homeland. That lover’s complaint has no place in subsequent iterations of the poem, but what *does* appear, in the Harvard recording, is a definite ripple of frustration, which might be considered a sea change in Moore’s thinking about interventionist politics. Pencilled at the top of the script and repeated once more for good measure in black ink (**Fig. 1**), an exclamation mark concludes the first clause – “Spenser’s Ireland / has not altered[!]” – as though to point up the sorry condition of Ireland’s recalcitrance. The voice of someone we may otherwise mistake for a whimsical apologist begins in this way to recede in the very opening breath of the poem, only for it be punctured and punctuated by further displays of typographic alarm: “Denunciations do not affect / [a] ~~the~~ culprit;    [!!]nor blows[!!]” Moore enunciates these lines in her recording with unprecedented zeal, mindful perhaps of the fact that “blows” *had* been suffered in recent days, but that it was no longer easy, or right, to point an accusing finger, or to identify “[a] ~~the~~ culprit” when the very notion of culpability had become so charged and capacious. In no other version of the poem does Moore make this tiny grammatical substitution – “a” for “the” – and it has the effect in December 1941 of casting her lyric in an

indefinite mood, of encouraging the listener to see that the “torture” of not being spoken to cuts both ways, and that the resolution to “never give in” might give us pause for thought.

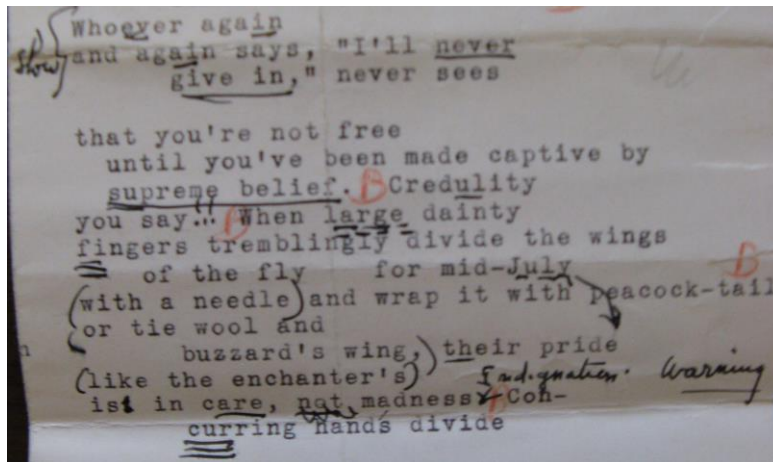


Fig. 3. “Spenser’s Ireland” (Moore 1941b, 2 [detail])

Having decelerated to allow the voice of dissent its proper say – “whoever again / and again says, ‘I’ll never / give in,’ never sees / that you’re not free / until you’ve been made captive by / supreme belief” – Moore inserts a note of “warning” in the margin, a sign of “indignation,” as though the work of “[c]on- / curring hands” has acquired a new, constitutional importance. To my ears, such vocal cues have the ring of a Hackett job, and indeed Moore herself was not insensitive to the inducements or redolence of a spot of linguistic opportunism:



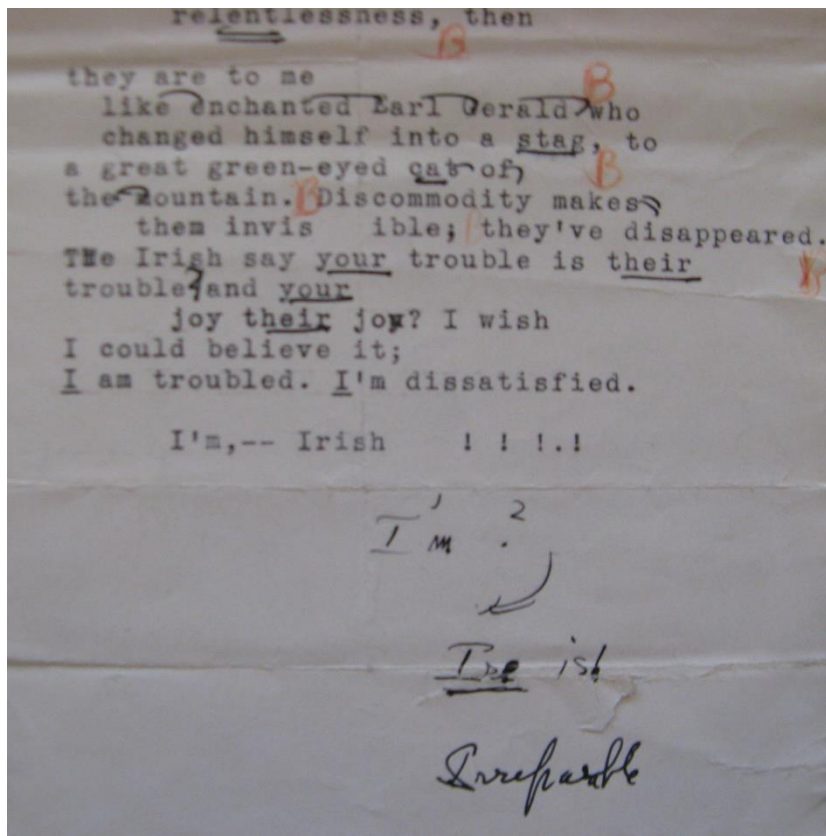


Fig. 4. "Spenser's Ireland" (Moore 1941b, 3)

The "ire" diphthong twangs quietly throughout "Spenser's Ireland," from the "iron" rich deposits of the giant anecdote, through changeable "Irish weather," to Moore's pronunciation of "Eire" as "I-re" in the poem's fifth stanza. In these closing lines, Moore spells out her irritation by uprooting the sound cluster once more. Being "Ire-ish," in December 1941, is a vexed and vexing business; and there is something "Irreparable" – and mournful – about that final, irritable confession.

It is an accident of timing that Moore's Harvard recording was undertaken in such conflicting circumstances. There is no way that she or Packard or the Gray Foundation could have known that her visit to Cambridge would coincide with a state of national emergency, or that the talk she'd been booked to deliver and the poems she'd agreed to record would end up speaking so acutely to the declarations penned by Roosevelt and Congress. And yet to think over this kind of aural friction might be to reappraise the facts of Moore's turn in the 1930s – which was performative as well as stylistic – and to think again about the transparency of compositional gestures that are too apt to slip away in the flurry of textual revision. I have often wondered what

Moore could have meant at the beginning of “Humility, Concentration, and Gusto” (1949) when she refers to “times like these.” Now we know – thanks to her letter to Mary Craig Shoemaker in late 1941 – that she began to formulate this essay at a pivotal moment in foreign affairs;<sup>23</sup> and so now, perhaps, it’s time to think more openly about the prestige and status we ascribe to her printed works, fortified by the knowledge that a particular date of publication may belie more ephemeral kinds of instantiation and rendition which characterise a work in progress. The reason critics have never been inclined to contextualize the Harvard recording is because most listeners have found themselves more than usually removed from its moment of inception: after three years of collecting dust, the recording was transferred from tape to disc in 1944 by the Harvard Vocarium, before being reassigned to the sound archives at the Library of Congress in 1948, where it was subsequently released as a composite album.<sup>24</sup> No marks remain on that composite album to disclose the recording’s provenance or historical coordinates, or to suggest that its material rite of passage commenced with such meticulous rehearsal.

As it turns out, there were some hiccups rehearsal could not forestall. In May 1944, upon listening to her disc, Moore confessed to feeling a little irked that she’d mangled the all-important word. “I am told that Eire is pronounced Air-uh,” she informed Packard, as much for his information as for hers, “and wish I had substituted the word Ireland for Eire” (1944b).<sup>25</sup> One feels for her, of course, but it’s difficult to wish, with her, that she’d managed to get her tongue around the name. For on 11 December 1941, there had been things about Eire (*Ire-uh*) that could not easily be ironed out – things, indeed, that only a poet of Moore’s shifting temperament had felt able to approximate. And for all her regrets, Moore could not bring herself to abandon Packard in such woeful humour. “[Y]our courage on behalf of idiosyncrasy,” she confessed, “helps me to forgive myself in ignorance,” and with that, it seems, she finally put the record straight.

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characteristically generous in sharing her own thoughts and discoveries, and in responding to my queries. So has Elizabeth Fuller, who remains a firm friend of every Moore scholar.

<sup>1</sup> For a sample of recent accounts and critiques, see Baar (2004), Hitchens (2009), Haarman and Lombardo (2009), and Astore (2016). To hear “the protagonists and the apologists...damn[ing] themselves in their own words,” see Weinberger (2005).

<sup>2</sup> As Hallett acknowledges (2012, 219), declarations of war have featured consistently in the workings of language philosophy, beginning with J. L. Austin’s lectures at Oxford and Harvard in the 1950s, later collected in *How to Do Things With Words* (1962/75).

<sup>3</sup> For details of Roosevelt’s compositional process, see the anonymous article in *Prologue* (2001). As the authors observe, Roosevelt had to do without two of his usual speech-writers, Samuel I. Rosenman and Robert Sherwood, who were in New York City on the day of the attack. The article includes digital reproductions of Roosevelt’s first amended draft.

<sup>4</sup> For analyses of the listening figures, see Barnouw (1968, 151) and Brown (1998, 118). The best recent attempt to tell the story of Pearl Harbor and its immediate repercussions is Kupfer (2012).

<sup>5</sup> Having joined the Maryland Naval Militia in October 1915, Warner had become a “permanent acting chaplain” on 11 March 1918. He’d gone on to serve upon the USS Detroit in the mid-1920s, and on the USS Arizona in the years leading up to the Second World War. He was stationed in New London, Connecticut, at the time of the Pearl Harbor bombing, which witnessed the narrow escape of the USS Detroit and the annihilation of the USS Arizona. Warner would retire from naval duties in 1948. His career in the navy is narrated in more detail by Willis (2010).

<sup>6</sup> The poem in question is “Dock Rats,” first published in *Others* (1919), and reprinted with some modifications in *Poems* (1921) and *Observations* (1924). See *BMM*, 95-96, 245-48.

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Moore never allowed her “Dock Rats” back into print, despite the opportunities for doing so in 1935, 1951, 1961 and 1967. Still, the Moore siblings continued to correspond about ships and shipping, as for instance when Marianne wrote to Warner in July 1932 of a new Mariner’s Museum in Virginia (*SL*, 268).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Craig (2000) and Lenthall (2007, 87-114). Carson (2002) and Harter (2013) both attend sensitively to Moore’s difficult political position in the 1930s – to her clash of opinion with the likes of Ezra Pound and Kenneth Burke, to her disapproval of New Deal legislation, and to what Carson characterises as “a civic republicanism informed by Calvinist values” (318). I am in agreement with Harter’s contention that “it is during the 1930s that Moore develops the sense of obligation that shifts her artistic priorities toward [her] later, more inclusive style” (335), but what I propose to contribute in this essay is the thought that Moore’s changing style was facilitated by the very media ecology that had made Roosevelt’s such a familiar voice in the mid-1930s.

<sup>8</sup> By contrast, one might look to Moore’s letter on 22 February 1933 to Morton Zabel, in which she mentions “Mr. Hoover’s call for a poem” and her unsuccessful attempt to come up with the goods (*SL*, 299). For the abbreviated history of this poem, see Molesworth 1990, 259-60.

<sup>9</sup> Moore returned to the material of her Harvard talk in December 1948, when she delivered a new version to the Grolier Club in New York City, whereupon she agreed to its publication in the *Grolier Club Gazette* (May 1949). It was subsequently reprinted in *Predilections* (1955), *A Marianne Moore Reader* (1961), and *CPr*, 420-26. Little evidence survives to suggest the way this material developed, if at all, in the intervening years – 1941-48 – save for internal indications such as the addition in the final piece of the passage about the Federal Reserve Note (dated 13 December 1948). Owing, no doubt, to the addition of this passage so late in the composition of the piece (just a week before its delivery to the audience of the Grolier



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Club), editors and publishers have fostered the idea that the piece belongs to that time, and have dated it, as in *CPr*, May 1949. Yet an unpublished letter on 26 December 1941 to Moore's cousin, Mary Craig Shoemaker, reveals that the opening paragraph of the piece we know today as "Humility, Concentration, and Gusto" was there in the lecture's first incarnation: "I began my talk by saying that in times like these, we tend to discredit art but that the pen is a sword; that the sword itself – as Commander King Hall has said in his book Total Victory – is of use not really to annihilate people but used in the hope of persuading the enemy to change his mind" (Moore 1941a).

<sup>10</sup> The Woodberry Poetry Room was located at this time in the Widener Library. For more on its history and its relocation in 1949 to the Lamont Library – to which Moore paid a visit in 1954 – see Mattern (2011).

<sup>11</sup> For more on Packard's career, see Packard and Rubery (2011).

<sup>12</sup> I trace the much longer arc of Moore's phonographic artistry in *Modernist Invention: Media Technology and American Poetry* (forthcoming 2018).

<sup>13</sup> "Bulls are cited, not said, if I may use a bull to define the speech genre," O'Connor quips, before proceeding to flesh out the matter in relation to the Edgeworths' *Essay on Irish Bulls* (1802) (166-67). For Maria Edgeworth's particular influence on Moore's poem, see Green (1997).

<sup>14</sup> As White observes in her facsimile edition, the first version of the poem appeared in *Furioso* 1 (Summer 1941) and did not include the stanza which begins "If in Ireland" (AG, 155-57 and cf. 48). Tara Stubbs calculates Moore's particular debt to Colum in *American Literature and Irish Culture, 1910-1955* (2013, 153-55).

<sup>15</sup> For the economy of Moore's borrowing in this poem, see Willis (1980).

<sup>16</sup> See Stubbs (2013, 154) and Miller (2002-2003, 9). The only person, to my knowledge, who has entertained the possibility I'm advancing here is Robin Schulze, who surmised some

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time ago (in conversation) that some of Moore's typescripts bear a resemblance to performance scripts. I'm grateful to her for sowing that seed, and for encouraging me to stick with it.

<sup>17</sup> I deal with Packard's thoughts on punctuation at length in *Modernist Invention* (2018).

<sup>18</sup> "The nicest Event of 1942 has been Lester [Littlefield]'s photostat of the Harvard Lecture," Bishop announced to Moore on 17 March 1942. "It has done me so much good. It is marvellous. [...] I only wish I knew what some of the little marks meant and could hear the delivery." (1942) The photostat does not appear to have survived.

<sup>19</sup> The case for reading the typescripts specifically as *performance* scripts, rather than "drafts," becomes indisputable when we compare all three typescripts with the recording of 1941. The typescript of "Spenser's Ireland" is consistent in appearance with those of "Rigorists" and the selection from "Virginia Britannia," and each of these corresponds precisely to the recording. Crucially, each typescript reveals hand-made revisions (of word and line sequence) that *only* appear in the recording, and not in any printings of the poems in question.

<sup>20</sup> Hackett first came into contact with Moore's poetry in 1920, thanks to the editor of *Broom*, Lola Ridge, who appears to have been a go-between (see Moore [1920(?)]). For more on the Irish-New York literary scene, see Stubbs (2009) and (2013).

<sup>21</sup> See T. Ryle Dwyer's assessment in *Irish Neutrality and the USA, 1939-1947* (1977), 26.

<sup>22</sup> For more on the trajectory of Irish-American negotiations, see Dwyer (1988), 24-25.

<sup>23</sup> See note 9 (above).

<sup>24</sup> Packard wrote to Moore on 12 February 1948 to detail his negotiations with the Library of Congress, which involved transferring the rights of the Harvard recording to the Library of Congress (Packard 1948). Thus the recording appeared the following year as *Twentieth*

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*Century Poetry in English: Paul Engle, Marianne Moore, Allen Tate, John Gould Fletcher [and] John Malcolm Brinnin Reading Their Own Poems*, Library of Congress PL 2 (1949).

<sup>25</sup> This letter from Moore to Packard in May 1944 helps to date another typescript of “Spenser’s Ireland” which is held in the Rosenbach archive (filed under I:04:21). Evidently produced and annotated on a different occasion to that of the Harvard script, the typescript features a pencil note that spells out a phonetic solution to pronouncing Eire (“Air-uh”); the note also outlines an alternative (“If Ireland”) to the troublesome phrase. These marginal instructions are strictly consistent with the advice Moore recounts in her letter to Packard. We do not know when or from whom this advice was received – in the wake of her playing the Harvard recording, perhaps, or on another occasion entirely. But what we *can* say for sure is that this typescript is a performance script and not a draft, since it clearly responds to difficulties that arose after the publication of *What Are Years*, and that it post-dates the recording in December 1941.